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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001602

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [BA](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES SECURITY ISSUES WITH INTERIOR
MINISTER SHAIKH RASHID

REF: A. MANAMA 01503

- [B](#). MANAMA 01578
- [C](#). MANAMA 01547
- [D](#). MANAMA 01553
- [E](#). STATE 199225
- [F](#). STATE 199863
- [G](#). MANAMA 01486
- [H](#). STATE 199146
- [I](#). MANAMA 01501
- [J](#). MANAMA 01406

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Begin summary: The Ambassador advised Minister of Interior Shaikh Rashid October 29 that the USG is prepared to transfer a third Bahraini national from Guantanamo to the government of Bahrain. The Ambassador noted continued concerns over the inflammatory remarks by Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad and the possible ramifications in Bahrain. Recent articles alleging abuse and hunger strikes involving Bahraini detainees in Guantanamo were also discussed as were events in Iraq and the status of the Joint Counterterrorism Center in Bahrain. End summary.

RELEASE OF A THIRD GUANTANAMO DETAINEE

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador met on October 29 with Minister of Interior Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa to discuss several security related issues in Bahrain. The Ambassador began by advising the Minister the U.S. was prepared to release a third Bahraini detainee from Guantanamo to the exclusive custody and control of the Government of Bahrain in the near future (ref h). The detainee would be transferred following receipt of written assurances similar to those received for the release of two other Bahraini detainees. The Ambassador asked the Minister for clarification on who would assume custody of the detainee upon arrival in Bahrain and reiterated the USG's concern that the individual not have an opportunity to leave Bahrain or become involved in future terrorist activities. The Minister assured the Ambassador that steps would be taken to ensure the activities of the returned detainees were monitored and any information generated from interviews conducted by Bahraini authorities would be made available to the USG.

COMMENTS BY IRANIAN PRESIDENT

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador discussed recent statements by Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad calling for Israel to be quote wiped off the map unquote. Shaikh Rashid stated he was initially shocked by the comments and believed the President had perhaps misspoken or been misquoted. However, follow-up statements by the Iranian government endorsing such a stance were simply unacceptable and highlight the fact Iran is the number one threat for the region and Bahrain. The Ambassador highlighted the recent demarche underscoring the United State's deep concern over these remarks and the continued international anxiety regarding Iran's nuclear program and it's alleged support of terrorism. He encouraged Bahrain to take an aggressive public stance against such statements and hoped neighboring Gulf states would follow (ref f). The Minister went on to say the upcoming International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) conference in Bahrain would provide an important opportunity to discuss coordinated responses to what he perceives to be an ever-increasing threat in the Gulf.

AL QUDS DAY CELEBRATIONS IN BAHRAIN

[1](#)4. (C) The Minister raised the issue of the Al Quds Day celebrations that took place on October 28 as an example of how things have changed. The celebrations, while slightly smaller than last year's event, saw the usual burning of American and Israeli flags as well as posters denouncing the U.S. administration. However, despite calls by some

religious leaders urging people not to carry any symbols unrelated to the Palestinian cause, new to this year's celebration were the presence of several Hezbollah flags as well as photos of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei. Public Security Chief Abdul-Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani commented the reactions were perhaps in response to the recent inflammatory comments of the Iranian President (ref e and f). Shaikh Rashid opined that President Ahmadi-Nejad likely timed his statements to arouse passions before Al Quds Day celebrations, and to deflect Iranian thought away from the government's inability to improve things domestically. He added that if President Ahmadi-Nejad keeps talking like this it would only mean trouble for the region. This will have to be monitored, he stated, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would need to consider what it could do to counter it. He expressed concern over the potential impact it would have on Bahrain's Shia, and suggested Shia elements would have to be watched more closely. Shaikh Rashid was clearly worried about the direction Ahmadi-Nejad was taking his country, and the impact the rhetoric would have in Bahrain.

PRESS REPORTING ON GUANTANAMO

15. (SBU) The Ambassador briefly discussed recent press reporting (ref c and d) alleging the sexual humiliation of Juma Al Dossary and the advanced hunger strike of Issa Al Murbati. The Ambassador expressed concerns about the inaccuracies found in the Arabic daily Akhbar Al Khaleej and English daily Gulf Daily News on October 19 and 20 and stated the Embassy was exploring a public response to the accusations. The Minister noted the inaccuracies and agreed with the Ambassador's suggestion of a public response to the allegations.

EVENTS IN IRAQ

16. (C) Recent progress in Iraq to include the referendum on the draft constitution (refs a and j) were discussed, and the Ambassador again thanked the Minister for the Bahrain government's support for the referendum. While the Minister agreed some progress was being made, he commented the USG should reconsider the role of previous Iraqi military personnel within the new government. He stated there were thousands of trained and loyal Iraqis among those military personnel removed from their positions who would take up the call to serve their country. He added Iraqi Sunni's have historically never been anti-American, however, circumstances are being created that could change that position. Pending individual security clearances, allowing ex-military personnel to apply for positions within the government would assist in the transition to a new and stable government and help to speed-up the departure of U.S. military forces. General Zayani added they would not have to be part of the new military or police forces but in lesser roles within the government such as the National Guard.

JOINT COUNTERTERRORISM TASK FORCE

17. (C) On the Joint Counterterrorism Center (JCTC), General Zayani commented the structure scheduled to house the center has been identified and equipment purchases are being made. It is still hoped the center would be operational in early 2006. The Ambassador reiterated the importance of moving forward on the establishment of the JCTC as quickly as possible, and urged the Minister to continue to give his full support for the center.

MONROE